J: Herskovits E-4,5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

178 [illegible]

in Africa, also allow play for the aesthetic impulse, have been lost as well. Ironworking is absent not only because the necessary deposits of iron ore are lacking, but because the technique of shaping the metal into various forms, which in Africa is in the hands of specialists, was apparently suppressed in the time of slavery. No native cloth is woven. Basketry has survived, but whereas in Africa designs of no small artistic merit are achieved in this medium, it is markedly utilitarian in Haiti. Even from a technical point of view, the basketry forms are of the simplest, the panniers used for transportation of products on mule-back being merely an in-and-out weave, and the plaited strips of which hats and the *macoute*, or carrying basket, are made are of a parallel simplicity.

Few African recreational forms have survived. *Wari*, the draughts-like West African game found today in many parts of the West Indies, is unknown in the interior of Haiti, though it has been introduced into Port-au-Prince, where it is played by longshoremen who have learned it from the sailors of near-by islands. String figures, important in West Africa, are not encountered, and no children's pursuits comparable to the play of young Africans were seen in Mirebalais, if the minor ceremony of marking the loss of childhood teeth be excepted. African types of recreation have in the main given way to cock-fights and card-games, both of which derive their interest from the opportunities they offer for gambling—a fact important in itself, since gambling is not one of the widespread African vices. The most important card-games are *trois-sept*, *mariage*, and *bezique*, and both men and women know them and play them for stakes. Similarly cock-fighting, particularly during the dry season, is a passionate avocation of the men. Large sums are wagered on the results of an encounter, and feeling often runs high.[9]

The Haitian genius for art and recreation is best embodied in the dance and its accompanying songs and drum rhythms. Virtuosity is attained not only by the dancers, but even more

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3
[P.112-HH]

306
335
532

54. Inside surface of a calabash bowl used in rituals of the houngfor, painted in black and white. The figure represents the graveyard lwa, Baron Samedi, with a pick, shovel, and tombstone. Length, 15 inches.

285
482
631

55. An altar emblem, the traditional peacock (vapeurk).

624

56. Wavi board cut from a mahogany log. Length, 29 inches.

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1958) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

[P. 112-I]

133
142
285
317
301
472
167

[3/4]

13. Donkey with a load of charcoal. Where the terrain is not too rugged, donkeys or small horses do some of the carrying. The making of charcoal has helped to denude the mountains of their forests.

2: Courlander B-5 (1877-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

And when the revolution came he produced for the Haitian armies knives, gun parts, and wheels to transport cannon. By the tens of thousands he made ingeniously devised metal objects to be thrown on the roads, before the French cavalry troops—objects so shaped that, no matter how they fell, a single sharp point stood erect to cripple the enemy horses. Yet knowledge of the West African uses of iron did not altogether disappear, and during the first century of independence the Haitian blacksmith created many old-style knives, spears, and ritual objects for the cult temple.

Even today, some of this old-style work is to be found in hounfors in the southwestern peninsula. One may see simple or ornate iron standards, made to support ceremonial offerings or candles, strikingly similar to standards in ancestral shrines in Dahomey. There are iron bells, both single and double, made in pure West African style; ornate ritual swords and sabers which are the crests of certain deities; coiled and uncoiled iron serpents representing the gods Damballa and Ayida; and stylized or semirealistic portraits of the deities. Many of these old pieces are nineteenth-century survivals; others have been forged within the past decade. [See plates 42-51, pp. 112-DD—112-FF.—Analyst]

An over-all impression of Haitian material culture is that artistic decoration is almost entirely absent and that the prime emphasis is on utility. Wooden cooking spoons are efficient in form, but missing from them is the delicate decorative carving often found in West Africa. The long wooden washing bowl, or *gamelle*, and the wooden mortar in which grain is pulverized are likewise clean-cut but stark and plainly utilitarian. Clay bowls, bottles, and storage jars are usually of simple, uniform design, with only accidental variations; there is little use of glazes, and the clay is often heavy and thick. Should there be a warri gameboard in the peasant hut, the chances are that it is roughly made, without legs or carved designs. Dugout canoes are usually crude in appearance, heavy and thick-walled, and irregular in form.

Yet there are many evidences—though one must seek them out—that esthetic impulses are quite alive. The gay peasant straw knapsack, or *sifon*, without which no mountain man makes a journey, has a charm and grace that is not diminished by familiarity and cheapness. Decorated with sisal braid and tassels, and colored with green and magenta dyes, each *sifon* on close inspection appears to be unique. In some communities in the south and southwest, burlap squares also are painted with these traditional dyes. About forty inches across, and made of sugar bags, these paintings swarm with geometric patterns and sometimes with figures of flowers and animals. They are purely decorative, being